

COME AND GONE

Wilde Sunflower Six Feet High

Blooms Only to Fade Away From the City.

Its Opinion of Art—Its Views on Newspapers—It Lectures—It Smokes Cigarettes—It is Dined and Wined.

"Oscar Wilde and servant, of England, Room 55."

That was the legend which a Herald reporter read upon the register of the Forest City House Saturday afternoon about 5 o'clock. A card asking the courtesy of an interview, and assuring the notorious stranger that the writer would be both brief and unaggressive, soon found its way up to the room of the aesthete; and by return porter an answer was sent granting the privilege asked, but craving ten minutes' time in which to finish a midday repast. In precisely ten minutes the reporter stood at the door of room 55, and rapped with gentle timidity.

Mr. Wilde did not answer the summons in person. His colored valet opened the door and ushered the caller into the presence of the far-famed apostle of the lily and the sunflower.

OSCAR WAS LOLLING

on an elegant sofa, and did not rise until his visitor had crossed the room. He then arose slowly, extended his hand reluctantly and pointed the reporter to a chair beside his own luxurious divan.

In the center of the room was a small, unaesthetic-looking table, at which the languid poet had just dined. The viands which remained unconsumed were just such as would be looked for in the menu of the aesthete—jellies, custards, pastry, etc., all served on decorated china. The sofa upon which the poet languished had offended his fastidious taste, and he had accordingly caused to be spread over it an afghan and a silk shawl of an old gold tint.

MR. WILDE HIMSELF

was attired in a velvet coat and vest of brown, and a substantial looking pair of ordinary pantaloons. In personal appearance he is exactly what the prevailing photographs represent him to be, save that a pair of rather obtrusive front teeth are displayed in conversation, which have failed to appear in any of the representations of the poet. His face is even more smooth and girlish than would appear in the photographs, and caused to flit through the scribe's mind the horrible suspicion that Oscar has

NEVER YET HAD OCCASION TO SHAVE.

Between his thumb and fore finger he held a dainty cigarette, which, from time to time, he thrust between his rubicund lips, puffing the fragrant smoke above his head in circling clouds that delighted his yearning soul.

"Mr. Wilde," began the inquisitor, kindly but firmly, "may I inquire what first resolved you of your mission, and inspired you to champion this modern aesthetical movement?"

"Well, my passion for art was greatly encouraged, if not created, by a visit to Italy when I was a boy. Then subsequently at Oxford I was greatly influenced by Ruskin. I was also much pained and saddened by seeing how unkindly

ALL OF ENGLAND'S GREAT MEN

were received, especially her literary men; how Byron, Shelley, Keats, Wordsworth, and all the rest were ridiculed! This, I now conceive to be the fate of all prominent men who depart from the common place in any degree, and I am no longer disturbed by it."

"Then you are able to take philosophically all the sarcasm and good-natured fun which has been directed at you since you came to America?"

"Philosophically? Why, I don't mind it in the least. At the very worst, it can only amount to a *personal inconvenience*, as though some one sought to throw mud at you while you were crossing the street. Why, all innovators must be indestructible. In crusading against

THE POPULAR STUPIDITY

and stagnation, I expect to incur ridicule; but I am absolutely impervious to it—it doesn't interfere with my serenity or my fixedness of purpose at all. It is not done from malice, and what is the use, then, in being troubled by it? It is done by a world which cannot understand; that has not been educated up to the aesthetical movement.

"How would you have the world changed?"

"I would create an artistic temperament. I would surround men with elevating environments that their lives might be beautiful. This is

THE SECRET OF ALL JOYOUSNESS

in life, and the keynote of all civilization—this artistic temperament; and it cannot be produced in any other way than by giving the people an opportunity to grow up in an atmosphere of noble and beautiful things. I think that every year in a great country, in America as much as in England, a certain amount of artistic intelligence and power is produced, and that the aim of any rational civilization is to seek out those men and women who have this power of design, this nobility of imagination, this love of the beautiful, and by means of a

SCHOOL OF DESIGN IN EACH CITY

to give men an opportunity of producing beautiful art. You in America don't want that we should look upon you as a mere collection of money-making merchants. You would like to influence the civilization of Europe. You are ambitious and should be so; but the only way you can influence us is by producing noble art and a noble civilization. Believe me, that we value your American poets much more than your American millionaires; and that we estimate you by the amount of great men you have produced, not by

YOUR BOARDED WEALTH.

"That's a rather severe implication, Mr. Wilde. Evidently you place a rather low estimate upon American art and civilization, when comparing them with English art and civilization?"

"Why, my dear young man," said Mr. Wilde, springing to his feet with a show of real enthusiasm, and addressing his visitor earnestly, "do you really think that American progress in these departments can be compared with that of England?"

The abashed reporter hung his head in mortification, and the poet went on:

"Can you seriously compare your art with ours? I have just been at Chicago, and while there I saw millions and millions of dollars sunk in public buildings, but I failed to find one single architectural triumph. Your poets are not to be compared with ours."

THE PRESS EAT DOWN UPON.

"Of course you have been misrepresented in the papers, Mr. Wilde. Would you care

to disclaim, at this time, some of the things which have been identified with your aesthetical movement?"

"My dear sir," responded the aesthete, "when I read all this trash in the newspapers about some one whom the editors are wont to call Oscar Wilde, I really wonder what the young man is like after all, and wish that I might see him myself. If it really mattered in the least what the newspapers say, I might take pains to refute some things; but it won't pay."

"Then you don't have a very high idea of American journalism?"

"You know well enough how artificial and meaningless it is, if you have been in the business at all. The press is comic, without being amusing or fair. Nothing which I read by way of criticism gives me pain; nothing by way of commendation gives me pleasure. Who are the editors, anyway? Most frequently they are from the number of escaped convicts and other depraved characters."

The reporter only weighs 125 pounds, so he smothered his desire for revenge, and did not annihilate the six foot sunflower on the spot. Besides that, he did not care to mar the furniture or gore up the carpet. He left, and the aesthete still lives to roam through America.

THE LECTURE.

Four or five hundred people gathered in Case Hall Saturday evening to hear the noted aesthete talk about the "English Renaissance." The lecturer appeared at a little after 8 o'clock, coming upon the stage unannounced, and proceeding directly to the substance of his address without the formality of an introduction. He was dressed as per contract, in knee breeches and dark blue silk stockings, white vest, white kid gloves and a dress coat. An unlimited expanse of shirt front terminated above in a neat collar and silk tie. It is not necessary to give a synopsis of the lecture, since the public are already familiar with the extracts from it which have been published in the Eastern dailies. The subject was handled skillfully, and in a manner which indicated that the speaker is a man of no mean ability, and at the same time one of ripe scholarship. His vocabulary is an extensive one, and his style quite flowery at times. Most of the things which he said appealed to his audience as being reasonably sensible, and far less visionary than would be supposed after reading the press comments and seeing the opera *Patience*. The lecture was considerably marred by a monotonous delivery.

A MIDNIGHT BANQUET.

After the completion of the lecture Mr. Wilde repaired to the Opera House, and occupied the north private box below during the last act of the *Gladiator*. At the conclusion of the play Mr. Wilde adjourned to the Windsor Club rooms, on Bank street, where a substantial banquet had been prepared and a small party of friends were waiting to entertain him. The company that sat down to the sumptuous repast embraced besides the sunflower poet the following gentlemen: Messrs. James Carson, Thomas Walton, W. J. Cotton, R. J. Irwin, F. J. King, H. W. Begges, H. S. Stevens, and H. W. Gorton, the last named gentleman being from Buffalo. After the meal the party spent the time until 3:30 A. M. in story-telling, the recalling of reminiscences, and varied conversation.

SUBSEQUENT MOVEMENTS.

Mr. Wilde remained in his room at the hotel nearly all Sunday, receiving few calls and taking his meals at his room. At 7:30 P. M. he took the train for Cincinnati, pursuant to appointments to lecture as follows: At Louisville, Tuesday; Indianapolis, Wednesday; Cincinnati, Thursday, and St. Louis Saturday.